

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or its equivalent each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's AYP requirement or its equivalent in the 2012-2013 school year. Meeting AYP or its equivalent must be certified by the state. Any AYP status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take foreign language courses.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2007 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for that period.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 or 2012.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district 5 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
1 Middle/Junior high schools
1 High schools
0 K-12 schools
7 Total schools in district
2. District per-pupil expenditure: 6091

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Small city or town in a rural area
4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 5
5. Number of students as of October 1, 2012 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	39	34	73
1	40	45	85
2	41	30	71
3	39	35	74
4	27	30	57
5	31	37	68
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12	0	0	0
Total in Applying School:			428

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
10 % Asian
12 % Black or African American
7 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
68 % White
3 % Two or more races
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2011-2012 school year: 24%
This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Step	Description	Value
(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	49
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	49
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	98
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2011	415
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.24
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	24

8. Percent of English Language Learners in the school: 16%
Total number of ELL students in the school: 69
Number of non-English languages represented: 18
Specify non-English languages:

Arabic, Bantu, Chinese, Dinka, French, Gujarati, Indonesian, Italian, Korean, Lao, Maithili, Malay, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Sudanese, Telugu, Uzbek

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 44%

Total number of students who qualify: 181

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 9%

Total number of students served: 36

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>2</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>21</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>6</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>2</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>5</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>19</u>	<u>0</u>
Resource teachers/specialists (e.g., reading specialist, media specialist, art/music, PE teachers, etc.)	<u>13</u>	<u>6</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>10</u>	<u>7</u>
Support staff (e.g., school secretaries, custodians, cafeteria aides, etc.)	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>
Total number	<u>46</u>	<u>15</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1:

22:1

13. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Daily student attendance	96%	95%	95%	95%	95%
High school graduation rate	%	%	%	%	%

14. **For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools):**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2012.

Graduating class size: _____

Enrolled in a 4-year college or university _____ %

Enrolled in a community college _____ %

Enrolled in vocational training _____ %

Found employment _____ %

Military service _____ %

Other _____ %

Total _____ **0%**

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award:

No

Yes

If yes, what was the year of the award?

PART III - SUMMARY

Meeker Elementary is located in Ames, in the center of Iowa. Ames has a population of about 60,000, and Iowa State University brings in another 30,000 people. Many of the students at Meeker Elementary are children of adults attending the University. Ames is passionate about education; parents, community members, and Iowa State University are very involved in the schools. The demographics have changed in Ames over the last ten years. There is much greater economic and racial diversity, and there is more transience. Teachers are challenged to meet a much wider range of needs than ever before.

Meeker Elementary is one of five (K-5) elementary schools in Ames. There are 425 students enrolled and 35 certified teachers. Traditionally, there have been three sections at each grade level; sometimes there is a “bubble” class and a fourth teacher is hired. The average teacher at Meeker has 11.43 years of experience. Fourteen teachers have Master’s Degrees, one has a doctorate, and one has National Board Certification. Meeker programming includes Level III (severe and profound) special education, English as a Second Language, and school-wide Title I reading and math. There are 44% of the students on Free and Reduced lunch, and there are students from 24 different countries.

The mission of the Ames Community Schools is to ensure that all learners develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and personal esteem necessary to grow in and shape a changing society. The Meeker staff is working to transform students’ education experience through a focus on four simple questions:

What do we want all students to learn?

How will we know when they’ve learned it?

What will we do when they’ve learned it?

What will we do when they don’t learn it?

The answers to these student-centered questions guide curriculum, assessment, and instruction. These questions and their answers frame the way differentiated instruction is provided for each student, technology is incorporated into learning and teaching, core and extracurricular activities are offered, and structures of support are created to promote each student’s success.

Five years ago, elementary principals in the Ames Community School District collaborated to create a district schedule. Before this schedule, each individual teacher in each individual building decided how much time to allocate to each subject and when to teach them. Third grade students in one class might receive 30 minutes of reading instruction daily, while students in another class received two hours of reading instruction, for example. The new schedule regulated the amount of time provided for each subject throughout the district, and it clearly established district priorities. The cornerstones of the new schedule were: a 120 minute literacy block, a 60 minute math block, 20 minutes for community building, 20 minutes for additional instruction, and common planning time for members of each grade level team. The new schedule has made a great difference by establishing district priorities and assuring that all students are receiving common amounts of instructional time in each content area.

Once the schedule was in place, the focus shifted to providing professional development to support teachers in maximizing the instructional time allotted within the new schedule. Literacy has been the clear priority. Teachers attend meetings at the district and building level, and teachers also work together in Professional Learning Communities to share, plan, evaluate, reflect on, and negotiate learning. Instructional Coaches, Leadership Teams, and principals provide professional development and support the teachers in the implementation of new learning. Instructional Coaches and principals work with individual teachers and with grade level teams to impact student growth through improving instruction.

Initially, the professional development focus was on establishing the structures of the Literacy Block, including Shared Learning, Guided Learning, and Work Stations. District protocols were established for those pieces, and teachers worked with Coaches, principals, and each other to understand and utilize these structures. Professional development to help teachers with Shared Learning (or whole-group) instruction has featured Read Alouds, Talk Alouds, and Think Alouds. Coaches have modeled the strategies, and teachers are expected to implement these strategies, reflect on their learning, and share with each other. Teachers form small groups of students with similar needs and serve them within guided learning, a data-informed, flexible small group model of differentiated instruction. In these small groups, there is a strong focus on utilizing texts at the appropriate instructional level for all students, and students learn and practice new reading and writing skills with teacher feedback. Literacy Work Stations may include Work on Writing, Word Work, Read to Self, and Read to Someone. Students have many opportunities to implement the strategies they are learning as they practice reading, writing, listening and speaking within the Work Stations. There is a strong focus on utilizing texts at the appropriate independent level for each student. Shared Learning, Guided Learning, and Work Stations are the structures through which core literacy instruction is provided. These structure are based on a release/increase of responsibility model through teacher modeling, guided practice, collaborative practice, and independent practice opportunities.

In addition to core instruction, struggling students also receive Additional Instruction. This twenty-minute segment is built into every teacher's daily schedule. Based on the data, students work with a teacher in small groups or individually supplemental or intensive instruction in an area of need. Progress is monitored, and groups are changed as students grow and learn new skills. This Additional Instruction has helped students "close the gap" and become proficient in literacy.

In additional to literacy, teachers have received professional development on Responsive Classroom strategies. Responsive Classroom strategies support community building within classrooms and schools, which, in turn, increases learning. Each day, students greet one another, cooperate on an activity, share personal stories, and read a Morning Message together. As students get to know each other, they feel more connected to their classmates, and they are more comfortable listening, speaking, collaborating, and trying new things. A "safe" learning environment is created. Social learning and academic learning go hand-in-hand, and the students achieve more.

Now that Meeker has established structures for learning and provided training on how to teach within these structures, the staff continues to implement, share, reflect, and grow together. The principal and the teachers use rubrics to evaluate and discuss methods and improving instruction. Data drives the decisions made, and differentiated instruction continues to be provided to meet the needs of a variety of learners. The Meeker Elementary staff is honored to be nominated for the National Blue Ribbon Award, and, whether this honor is received or not, the journey of continuous improvement for students and staff will continue.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

1A

The Ames Community School District develops an annual Comprehensive School Improvement Plan. This plan identifies system-wide assessments and the performance-levels of each assessment. In this plan, the District administers one annual standardized assessment. Until the 2011-2012 school year, this was known as the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. This assessment was revised and is now known as the Iowa Assessments. In addition, a number of reading and math criterion-referenced assessments are administered in a standardized way.

When known as ITBS, percentile ranks were used to determine performance levels. The “cut points” for these performance levels were determined by the state. The 40th percentile and below were considered non-proficient. The 41st percentile through 89th percentile were considered “intermediate”. The 90th percentile and above were considered “high”. When the Iowa Assessments were revised, the state moved from using percentile ranks to national standard scores to identify performance levels. This decision was made so that growth data could be collected and used as part of the analyses. The same three performance levels are still used. The “cut points” for each performance level differ by grade and content area when using national standard scores. The national standard scores cut points are the rough equivalent to the percentile ranks of the same raw score. This allows the District and the state to compare the results from ITBS with the results from Iowa Assessments.

The Ames Community School District has also developed performance levels for our criterion-referenced assessments. There are five performance levels: Extreme Risk/Emergent; High Risk/Early; Supplemental Need/Still Developing; Core Instruction/Developed; and Extended Learning/Advanced. These levels support prioritization of additional instruction/interventions for students.

1B

Reading:

When looking at 5 years of trend data, a key factor to consider is that the last year of data (2011-2012) is the transition year from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills to the Iowa Assessments. The Iowa Assessments were designed to be more cognitively challenging.

In third grade, the general trend in overall proficiency is an upward trend, and an increase in proficiency from 2007-2008 was maintained even with an increase in cognitive demands.

In third grade, the general trend in proficiency for students who are low SES is an upward trend from 2007-2008 to 2010-2011. With the switch to Iowa Assessments, the percentage dropped slightly.

The numbers of special education students, English Language Learners, and minority students are too small – each group has an “n” of 10 or lower – to analyze the data for third grade as a group. The data is examined at the student level to inform instruction.

In fourth grade, the general trend in overall proficiency is an upward trend from 2007-2008 to 2010-2011. With the switch to Iowa Assessments, the percentage dropped slightly.

In fourth grade, the general trend in proficiency for students who are low SES is inconsistent with peaks and valleys. The percentage of proficient students was higher in 2010-2011 than 2007-2008, even with an increase in cognitive demands.

The numbers of special education students, English Language Learners, and minority students are too small – each group has an “n” of 10 or lower – to analyze the data for fourth grade as a group. The data is examined at the student level to inform instruction.

In fifth grade, the general trend in overall proficiency was first upward and then downward – a “hill” trend. In 2011-2012, the percentage of proficient students was similar to proficiency levels in 2007-2008, even with an increase in cognitive demands.

In fifth grade, the general trend in proficiency for students who are low SES is an upward trend from 2007-2008 to 2010-2011. With the switch to Iowa Assessments, the percentage dropped slightly.

The numbers of special education students, English Language Learners, and minority students are too small – each group has an “n” of 10 or lower – to analyze the data for fifth grade as a group. The data is examined at the student level to inform instruction.

Math:

When looking at 5 years of trend data, a key factor to consider is that the last year of data (2011-2012) is the transition year from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills to the Iowa Assessments. The Iowa Assessments were designed to be more cognitively challenging.

In third grade, the general trend in overall proficiency is an upward trend. The increase in proficiency from 2007-2008 was maintained even with an increase in cognitive demands.

In third grade, the general trend in proficiency for students who are low SES is an upward trend from 2007-2008 to 2010-2011 (with a drop in 2008-2009). With the switch to Iowa Assessments, the percentage dropped slightly.

The numbers of special education students, English Language Learners, and minority students are too small – each group has an “n” of 10 or lower – to analyze the data for third grade as a group. The data is examined at the student level to inform instruction.

In fourth grade, the general trend in overall proficiency is an upward trend (but this was not a consistent increase). The percentage of proficient students increased from 2007-2008 to 2010-2011, even with the switch to the Iowa Assessments.

In fourth grade, the general trend in proficiency for students who are low SES is an upward trend (but this was not a consistent increase, with peaks and valleys). The percentage of proficient students increased from 2007-2008 to 2010-2011, even with the switch to the Iowa Assessments.

The numbers of special education students, English Language Learners, and minority students are too small – each group has an “n” of 10 or lower – to analyze the data for fourth grade as a group. The data is examined at the student level to inform instruction.

In fifth grade, the general trend in overall proficiency was an upward trend. The percentage of proficient students increased from 2007-2008 to 2010-2011, even with the switch to the Iowa Assessments.

In fifth grade, the general trend in proficiency for students who are low SES is an upward trend from 2007-2008 to 2010-2011. With the switch to Iowa Assessments, the percentage dropped slightly, but it was still greater than our 2007-2008 proficiency results.

The numbers of special education students, English Language Learners, and minority students are too small – each group has an “n” of 10 or lower – to analyze the data for fifth grade as a group. The data is examined at the student level to inform instruction.

Struggling learners are supported at all grade levels. Classroom teachers meet with support teachers every six weeks to analyze assessment data. Students achieving below proficient receive Additional Instruction, which is above and beyond core instruction. This Additional Instruction is provided by special education teachers (for those who qualify), Title I teachers, and classroom teachers. This support can be provided through small group instruction or one-on-one. Specific and measurable goals are written and monitored for each student, and teaching adjustments are made if progress is not sufficient. Groups are adjusted as necessary each six weeks as students gain skills and no longer need additional support.

2. Using Assessment Results:

At Meeker Elementary, assessment results are analyzed at the building, grade-level, classroom-level, and student-level by teachers and administrators on an on-going basis. The assessment results are both from district-wide assessments (benchmarking, DRA, PAT, Iowa Assessments, Local-Math Assessment, district progress monitoring assessments) and from teacher-created assessments.

At the building level, the staff analyzes the Iowa Assessment data, the local math assessment data, and the DRA data each fall and spring. In the fall, the data is used to establish building goals for the year by identifying strengths and areas for improvement. In the spring, the data is analyzed to determine if the goals were met.

At the grade-level, the same data is examined along with additional data sources such as benchmarking. After identifying strengths and areas for improvement, each grade-level Professional Learning Community (PLC) uses this data to identify a goal and create a plan to address this goal. Teachers work together in Grade Level Professional Learning Communities each week to implement plans, monitor student progress, and adjust plans as necessary.

At the classroom-level, teachers use benchmarking data, district progress monitoring tools, and classroom data to determine learning outcomes for shared learning times, form flexible, small groups, and differentiate collaborative and independent practice opportunities.

Classroom teachers, SUCCESS teachers (Title I and at-risk teachers), ELL teachers, instructional coaches, and the building administrator attend Data Meetings approximately once every 6 weeks. At these meetings, data is examined to determine which students need additional support because they are performing below grade-level. Supplemental Instructional Groups and Intensive Instructional Groups are formed and instructional intervention plans, including goals and progress monitoring plans, are created. These interventions are provided daily from 10-30 minutes, as needed. Students who are struggling may receive interventions from special education teachers, Title I teachers, or classroom teachers. The intervention instruction is differentiated and designed to specifically meet the needs of the students. Each teacher providing interventions collects progress monitoring data and adjusts instruction as needed to support continual growth.

The Ames Community School District shares data with the community in a variety of ways. Standardized assessment results for all schools are posted on our district web site, shared in the community newspaper, and shared during School Board meetings, which are televised locally.

Meeker Elementary shares building standardized test results with parents through the school newsletter, the Meeker Speaker. Results are also posted on the school web site. Finally, the standardized test results are presented to the School Board each spring.

At the classroom level, teachers share standardized test results in classroom newsletters, during parent/teacher conferences, and by sending home a detailed report of each student's performance. Parents are encouraged to meet with teachers to discuss their child's results if they have any questions or concerns.

Data from sources other than standardized tests are also shared with students and parents. Students receive results from classroom tests, for example, a day or two after taking the test. Teachers go through tests with students afterwards to re-teach the concepts and help students understand the mistakes they made. Tests are often sent home to parents to review with their students. Students also receive immediate feedback from teachers during Shared Learning, Guided Learning, Work Stations or within other varied instructional structures that are used by teachers. Teachers also use Student Planners, e-mail, phone calls, and personal meetings to keep parents informed of student progress and student need. It is the desire of Meeker Elementary to ensure that parents are never surprised by a report on a child's progress. All stakeholders should know exactly how each student is progressing throughout the school year.

3. Sharing Lessons Learned:

The leaders of the Ames Community School District have worked to create a systems approach, rather than a collection of individual schools with varying initiatives. Therefore, Meeker looks similar to the other elementary school buildings.

ACSD has many different avenues for teachers to share with and learn from each other. The sharing isn't so much "here is a new strategy the rest of you have never heard of"; it's more "here's how I have successfully implemented that strategy we learned about together."

Meeker Elementary teachers have the opportunity to work with grade-level colleagues throughout the district 3-4 times a year. This is a time for collaboration, problem solving, and sharing in order to support the implementation of the District's initiatives and continued professional growth for each teacher. For example, at one meeting this year, the teachers at each grade-level began to create a "master list" of quality mentor texts that aligned to both content area standards/grade-level expectations and literacy standards/grade-level expectations. As the list was being constructed, teachers had the opportunity to talk with and listen to teachers from their grade level discuss and reflect on the use of various books in the classroom and their implementation of various instructional methods (specifically the Read Aloud, Talk Aloud, and Think Aloud) using these titles. While the District-wide Grade Level meetings have a different focus each time, the goal is always to improve instruction and raise student achievement through the sharing, collaboration, problem solving, and negotiating of the teachers.

The elementary principals also meet as a Professional Learning Community. During these PLC times, celebrations are shared, concerns are problem solved, and common understandings of varied instructional methods are negotiated.

Each elementary school in the district also has a Quality Instructional Leadership Team, and these teams meet monthly to learn together. The Meeker team has the opportunity to share our successes in the large group setting, in small group settings, and in partner sharing opportunities. In this way, other teachers and other schools can benefit from the successes and learnings that Meeker teachers have experienced.

Meeker Elementary also shares lessons learned with the community through School Board presentations (which are telecast). For example, the principal gave a presentation on the professional development plans established to meet student needs. Lessons learned are also shared with the community through

newspaper articles. For example, as Meeker focused on the importance of community building through the implementation of Responsive Classroom, the newspaper ran a story on this work and its impact on student learning.

4. Engaging Families and Communities:

One of the basic tenets of Meeker Elementary is the importance of building relationships between the school and the families served by the school. The goal is for continual two-way communication. Teachers send weekly newsletters (or e-newsletters) so parents know what is happening at school. Many also send e-mail updates as well. The desire is for parents to never be surprised by any news because of consistent communication.

This relationship begins at the New Family Orientation in August. The principal and the secretary make presentations, so families know what Meeker Elementary has to offer and how Meeker Elementary operates. In addition to the school sharing information with parents, information is also gathered from the parents. Parents have the opportunity to ask questions, and the 5th grade students give tours of the building as well. Allowing parents to obtain all the information and see all the friendly faces helps establish a strong foundation for this long-term relationship, and it makes them more comfortable at Meeker Elementary.

Conversations are continued with parents during the first week of school at Mini-Conferences. Whereas Orientation is a large-group presentation, Mini-Conferences are one-on-one conversations where the parents do most of the talking. Teachers ask parents questions about their students, and parents have the opportunity to share what they believe is important for the school to know about their child. The information gathered about students' preferences, learning styles, and special needs is very valuable in planning for the year.

Early in September, Meeker has a Back To School Night. This is an opportunity for teachers to share with parents classroom routines, what the students will be learning this year, and plans on working together for success.

Parent-Teacher Conferences are held twice during the school year. This is an opportunity to give detailed progress reports to parents. Parents receive written and oral reports on how their children are progressing academically and socially.

Meeker Elementary also offers a number of evening events for families to attend, including the Carnival, Science Night, Multi-Cultural Night, Literacy Night, the Technology Fair, and the Daddy/Daughter Dance.

It is the belief of Meeker Elementary that parents play a big role in the success of their children, and establishing strong relationships and a community between families and the school is a priority.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

Following the state’s legislation, the Ames Community School District has adopted the Iowa Common Core Standards as our standards and grade-level/course-level expectations for language arts and mathematics grades K-12. In addition, using the Iowa Core, the Ames Community School District has developed standards and grade-level expectations for science and social studies grades K-12. ACSD also has developed standards for all content areas offered and grade-level/course-level expectations for all courses – this includes, but is not limited to, counseling, physical education, visual arts, performing arts, technology, business, and foreign language.

The philosophy of the Ames Community School District is to not purchase a textbook series and “follow this,” but rather to identify resources that will support the learning and instruction of the standards and grade-level expectations. Materials are resources, not the curriculum. The curriculum is the Ames Community School District’s standards and grade-level/course-level expectations.

As part of the curriculum review process, the standards and grade-level expectations are first examined, and, if need be, revised. Then a process of materials and resources that are well suited to support us in providing instruction around our standards and grade-level expectations is implemented. For example, in mathematics, Every Day Math was adopted as a resource to use. This includes not only the student-reference books, but the games and manipulatives. In Literacy, leveled books were purchased for building book rooms to support student-text match during instruction.

The Ames Community School District and Meeker Elementary have adopted the Common Core English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects as the District’s language arts curriculum. Meeker Elementary does not implement a published reading program. Instead, a focus has been on building resources to support implementation of the Common Core through quality instruction. Emphasis has been on the use of quality mentor texts to support the development of both reading and writing. An additional emphasis has been placed on building strong classroom libraries and a strong building bookroom. These two resources are used to support appropriate student-text matches during independent reading opportunities and during guided practice/learning opportunities while instruction, scaffolding, and coaching are provided. In addition to quality mentor texts and leveled books, teachers use a wide variety of resources during guided practice/learning and during independent practice/collaborative practice opportunities depending upon the learning outcomes.

The Ames Community School District and Meeker Elementary have adopted the Common Core Mathematical Standards as the District’s math curriculum. The primary resource being used to address the District’s curriculum is Every Day Math (EDM). This program uses a spiraling curriculum approach and distributed practice. It is designed to support conceptual understanding of mathematical content and process. Teachers are encouraged to implement instructional methods that support the development of conceptual understanding, such as manipulatives and visual representations. The instructional structures are shared learning, guided learning, and collaborative and independent practice opportunities.

The science standards and grade-level expectations for the Ames Community School District and Meeker Elementary are aligned to the Iowa Core. The Iowa Core emphasizes integrating “Science as Inquiry” into each of the sciences: Life Science, Physical Science, and Earth and Space Science. Meeker Elementary has been participating in a research grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) focused on helping students develop richer understandings of science and stronger literacy skills through the implementation of the Science Writing Heuristic (SWH). This approach uses argument-based/negotiated-based learning and inquiry-based strategies. Studies have found that students who use this approach build confidence in using the scientific process, improve their critical thinking skills, and

increase their performance on standardized tests – both in science and in reading. The SWH approach is independent of any standard curriculum or resources. This allows the District the freedom to revise Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) as needed and provide additional resources (such as trade books, articles, and manipulatives) without changing the approach or method to teaching science. In addition, the SWH approach will support the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards approach to quality science instruction.

The Ames Community School District and Meeker Elementary have adopted the Iowa Core for Social Studies as the District’s social studies curriculum, which focuses on behavioral sciences, economics, geography, history, and civic literacy. Students read reflectively and critically, analyze opinions on social issues, and learn to participate in civic and community life as active and informed citizens. The primary resource being used to address the District’s curriculum is the Scott Foresman series (which includes Communities, Regions, and the United States). Teachers support learning through additional resources (like trade books, articles, guest speakers, and field trips) as well.

The Ames Community School District has created it’s own K-12 Physical Education Standards, based on the national standards as a model and guide. These standards include: Standard 1: Applies a variety of concepts and demonstrates movement competencies to achieve a physically active lifestyle. Standard 2: Understands that movement and physical activity provide opportunities for enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and social interaction. Standard 3: Demonstrates responsible and appropriate social behavior, including respect for differences among people, in a physical education setting. Over the years, the Ames School District and Meeker Elementary have partnered with Iowa State University on a Fitnessgram program. Specific skills, such as the mile or flexed arm hang, are tested to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the students. Life-long fitness and activity are stressed as important for creating healthy, strong bodies for many years to come.

The Ames Community School District Art Program standards are based on the National Art Education Associations’s standards and the Iowa Core Curriculum recommendations for art standards. The standards are addressed through an approach that includes the four components of the Getty Institute’s Discipline Based Art Education: aesthetics, art criticism, art history and art production. Collaboration with classroom teachers in literacy, math, science, social studies and technology is part of the articulated Grade Level Expectations we teach students in kindergarten through 5th grade at Meeker School. There are twelve to fifteen Grade Level Expectations for each grade level. These expectations were developed by a committee of K-12 art teachers, and they provide the framework for evaluating students in art education.

2. Reading/English:

The Ames Community School District, in order to align with legislation, has adopted the Common Core English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects as the District’s language arts curriculum. While the content of these standards is an important factor in instruction, an emphasis is also placed on the key considerations when these standards were designed and on the capacities of the literate individual identified in the Common Core. In terms of the key considerations, the District and Meeker Elementary are focusing on an integrated model of literacy, blending research and media skills into the standards, the shared responsibility for students’ literacy development, focused and aligned instruction and on-going assessment. All six capacities for a literate individual are embedded into the focus and emphasis of our literacy program. In order to support the shifts – both in terms of content and in terms of instructional paradigms – that will need to occur between current practices and implementation of the Common Core, Alberti’s article “Making the Shifts” is being used as a starting point for professional development and implementation. The three major areas of focus for these literacy shifts are building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction text, grounding reading and writing in evidence, and providing regular practice with complex texts and academic language.

The Common Core supports a focus on the foundational components of reading. The District modified these in order to take a K-5 approach and integrate reading and writing. So the foundational components of phonological awareness, word identification fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension are organized around Shanahan's four-block approach of Word Knowledge (phonological awareness, phonics, letter identification, word accuracy, syllabication, word identification strategies, and vocabulary), Fluency (pace, phrasing, smoothness, and expression from Rasinski's MDFS), Comprehension (at all levels), and Writing (Purposes, Components, and Process).

Neither the Ames District nor Meeker Elementary implements a published reading program. Instead, a focus has been on building resources to support implementation of the Common Core through quality instruction. This has started with an emphasis on the use of quality mentor texts to support the development of both reading and writing (and to support gaining content knowledge to be used in the development of speaking and listening). An additional emphasis has been placed on building strong classroom libraries and a strong building bookroom. These two resources are used to support appropriate student-text matches during independent reading opportunities and during guided practice/learning opportunities while instruction, scaffolding, and coaching are provided. During independent reading, the emphasis is for students to be engaged in text that they can read independently – a text from which they can construct meaning. During instructional reading, the emphasis is for students to be engaged in text in the more challenging range of their zone of proximal development for the learning outcome. This is a text that cannot be read independently and causes the student to struggle – there is room for growth. During neither of these practice/learning times are children in text that they cannot construct meaning from even with teacher support. Those texts are more appropriate for shared learning opportunities.

In addition to quality mentor texts and leveled books, teachers use a wide variety of resources during guided practice/learning and during independent practice/collaborative practice opportunities depending upon the learning outcomes. These resources include, but are definitely not limited to, white boards, magnetic letters, Say Something Cards, Sharing Cards, writing purpose frameworks, editing checklists, listening stations, computers, sticky notes, Say It Move It cards, and Elkonian boxes.

In order to ensure that students have developed the appropriate emergent literacy skills, kindergarten and first grade students take subtests from the Phonological Awareness Test -2, the Observation Letter Identification Test, and sight word tests in the fall, winter, and spring or until they have achieved mastery.

In order to ensure that students are reading at grade-level, the Developmental Reading Assessment-2 is administered using just the grade-level passage in the fall and the spring.

In order to gain additional information about a student's reading in terms of reading range, accuracy/miscues, self-corrections/monitoring, oral reading fluency, literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and author's craft, the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmarking System is administered at least three times a year to all students.

At the classroom level, teachers collect formative data around reading and writing learning outcomes in a variety of ways. In addition, many teachers have developed pre-assessments to use prior to the start of new outcomes in order to guide their instruction and support differentiation of instruction.

In addition to teacher-developed assessments, the District has developed a diagnostic process and progress monitoring tools for the key areas of reading development for all K-12 teachers to use: phonological awareness, letter identification, phonetic knowledge, sight word knowledge, word identification/accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Comprehension goals and progress monitoring are broken down into the following areas: fiction retell, nonfiction retell, predictions, connections, clarifying and monitoring, visualizing, using visual representations, drawing conclusions, attending to text features, attending to text structures, question generating, and summarizing. In addition to being a common tool with which to "check" students growth towards specific standards/learning outcomes, these tools are also

being designed in a way that will allow teachers to get a sense of students' conceptual understanding and use of literacy strategies and processes through student interviews.

In terms of writing, the District has developed a diagnostic process and progress monitoring tools. These are currently being used by the special education teachers at Meeker but are starting to be shared with the classroom teachers.

In order to support the implementation of the Common Core, a two-hour, uninterrupted literacy block is provided in every classroom. During this literacy block, three basic instruction structures are used. The instructional structures are shared learning, guided learning, and collaborative and independent practice opportunities through the use of workstations. Shared learning is a whole group instructional time in which teachers use quality mentor texts to introduce concepts, provide models, support group negotiations around claim and evidence, and provide guided practice. Guided learning is a time for small, data-informed, flexible groups. Scaffolding and coaching are provided in the students' zone of proximal development in the areas of reading and writing. These small groups allow for differentiated learning outcomes and differentiated instruction in order to meet the needs of students with varying performance levels. Collaborative and independent practice opportunities are times when students either work together or independently to develop and apply their literacy skills, processes, and strategies. This is done during workstations. The most common workstations are independent reading/read to self, collaborative conversations/read to someone, work on writing, and word work. In kindergarten and first grade, listening stations are also often implemented.

The gradual release of responsibility model is the primary instructional model used to provide instruction. The District stresses the fact that this model is not a linear approach but recursive in nature.

Teachers are encouraged to implement instructional methods that support the development of literacy skills, higher-order learning/thinking, content-area knowledge, and metacognitive awareness. This goal is to be authentic in the learning opportunities provided along with providing academic choice. Students need to own their learning – they need to be doing the work.

Comprehension instructional methods are currently focused on the Read Aloud, the Talk Aloud, the Think Aloud, and explicit instruction. The Read Aloud supports students in digging into sophisticated text and using text evidence. The Talk Aloud supports students in developing the reader-writer connection. The Think Aloud supports students in developing comprehension strategies with the purpose of thinking more deeply about text. When students are implementing their own Read Alouds, Talk Alouds, and Think Alouds, they are close reading. The goal of this instruction is to not only develop deep understanding of text and gain cognitive control of strategies but also to develop metacognitive awareness.

In terms of writing instructional methods, teachers are moving to an ICE IT approach (immerse in text, critique texts, emulate the style, involve others in talk about text) with the link between reading and writing being strong mentor texts and the Talk Aloud.

Vocabulary instruction is an area that needs continued professional development. For those teachers that have dug into this work, the research of Isabella Beck has been a primary resource.

Fluency instruction emphasizes authentic opportunities for repeated readings in conjunction with strong models of fluent reading and explicit instruction around the components of fluent reading.

Word identification instruction emphasizes explicit and systematic phonics instruction using word families or patterns instead of rules. In addition, it emphasizes explicit instruction in word identification strategies and in structural analysis, including syllabication.

Phonological Awareness instruction emphasizes small group, explicit instruction. The instruction is “game-like” and “song-like.” Phonemic awareness instruction is linked to letter identification instruction, as suggested in the research.

While structures are in place to provide differentiated learning opportunities in both guided learning and in collaborative and independent practice opportunities, some students will need more differentiated support than these structures can provide. For students who are “high-fliers” in literacy, Meeker Elementary has an ELP (TAG) program. One of the strands of this program is humanities/literacy. For students who struggle in the area of literacy, the additional instruction time built into the schedule can be used to provide literacy interventions. The intervention instruction is provided either by the classroom teacher or by a SUCCESS teacher (a teacher funded through Title I and at-risk funds). To ensure the implementation of quality interventions, Allington’s work has been used to develop an intervention framework that is implemented by all teachers. For students on either end of this spectrum, goals are written and growth/progress is monitored in order to ensure that instruction is meeting each student’s needs.

3. Mathematics:

The Ames Community School District, in order to align with legislation, has adopted the Common Core Mathematical Standards as the District’s math curriculum. While the content of these standards is an important factor in instruction, an emphasis is being placed on the Mathematical Practices, which will influence HOW the content is taught and learned. In order to support the shifts – both in terms of content and in terms of instructional paradigms – that will need to occur between current practices and implementation of the Common Core, Alberti’s article “Making the Shifts” is being used as a starting point for professional development and implementation.

The primary resource being used to address the District’s curriculum is Every Day Math (EDM). This program uses a spiraling curriculum approach (based on Jerome Bruner’s work) and uses distributed practice. It is designed to support conceptual understanding of mathematical content and process.

In order to ensure that students have mastered the expected standards by the end of each grade, the District has developed a Local Math Assessment for each grade-level. This assessment was designed by teachers to “check” each grade-level expectation in the spring of the year. It is one measure that allows the District and Meeker Elementary to examine how effectively the curriculum is being taught.

At the classroom level, teachers currently use the assessments provided by EDM as formative and summative data. In addition, many teachers have developed pre-assessments to use prior to the start of new units in order to guide their instruction and support differentiation of instruction.

In addition to teacher-developed assessments, the District is currently developing diagnostic tools and progress monitoring tools. In addition to being a common tool with which to “check” students growth towards specific standards/learning outcomes, these tools are also being designed in a way that will allow teachers to get a sense of students’ conceptual understanding and use of mathematical strategies and processes through student interviews. This work is rooted in the microgenetic studies of children’s mathematical strategy development and overlapping wave theory. From a more practitioner-viewpoint, it takes advantage of the work of people like Richardson and Burns.

The Ames Community School District is just beginning to focus its professional development efforts in the area of mathematics. In order to align to both the District’s Education Plan and the recommendations from the Common Core and NCTM, the District is following a similar student-centered, instructional approach to its literacy instructional approach.

The instructional structures are shared learning, guided learning, and collaborative and independent practice opportunities. Shared learning is a whole group instructional time in which teachers introduce concepts, support group negotiations around claim and evidence, provide guided practice, and provide models. Guided learning is a time for small, data-informed, flexible groups. Scaffolding and coaching are provided in the students' zone of proximal development. These small groups allow for differentiated learning outcomes and differentiated instruction in order to meet the needs of students with varying mathematical performance levels. Collaborative and independent practice opportunities are times when students either work together or independently to develop conceptual understanding, apply their conceptual understanding, or delve into problem solving. This all occurs in a 60-minute, uninterrupted math block.

The gradual release of responsibility model is the primary instructional model used to provide instruction. The District stresses the fact that this model is not a linear approach. In fact, often times when developing conceptual understanding, teachers enter the model at the independent practice or collaborative practice phase as inductive reasoning opportunities and/or inquiry-based reasoning opportunities are provided.

Teachers are encouraged to implement instructional methods that support the development of conceptual understanding. These include things like the use of manipulatives and visual representations. It also includes providing inductive reasoning opportunities and the use of claims, evidence, and group negotiations around mathematical concepts. Finally, Burns' work on the importance of student talk during math is an approach that is beginning to be emphasized in terms of instruction and formative assessment. As part of the development of conceptual understanding, quality questioning skills are essential – both to support mathematical understanding and metacognitive awareness of mathematical reasoning.

Once conceptual understanding is developed, mental models are provided through the use of think alouds to support students in learning how to apply their understanding effectively and efficiently.

The development of numerical reasoning (and application of this reasoning) is supported through the use of the EDM games and through distributed practice using approaches such as the four-block warm-up. In addition, the District is moving towards an expectation of mental math opportunities as part of the instructional routine. While this is an eventual goal, this is a work in progress.

While structures are in place to provide differentiated learning opportunities in both guided learning and in collaborative and independent practice opportunities, some students will need more differentiated support than these structures can provide. For students who are “high-fliers” in mathematics, Meeker Elementary has an ELP (TAG) program. One of the strands of this program is mathematics. For students who struggle in the area of mathematics, the additional instruction time built into the schedule can be used to provide math interventions. The intervention instruction is provided either by the classroom teacher or by a SUCCESS teacher (a teacher funded through Title I and at-risk funds). For students on either end of this spectrum, goals are written and growth/progress is monitored in order to ensure that instruction is meeting each student's needs.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

The Ames Community School District has been participating in a research grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) focused on helping students develop richer understandings of science and stronger literacy skills through the implementation of the Science Writing Heuristic (SWH). This approach uses argument-based/negotiated-based learning and inquiry-based strategies. Studies have found that students who use this approach build confidence in using the scientific process, improve their critical thinking skills, and increase their performance on standardized tests – both in science and in reading.

Meeker was one of the pilot schools to implement SWH in grades 3-5. Now all elementary buildings are implementing SWH in grades 3-5. The next step is to provide professional development to support implementation in grades K-2 district-wide.

The SWH approach was adopted because of its authentic, student-centered approach to science using argument-based learning. This approach supports the District's focus on academic choice as students identify questions they want to explore and investigate around the essential question. This academic choice, along with the collaboration around and sharing of claims and evidence and the on-going negotiations support the development of higher-level thinking skills, support higher levels of student engagement, and support students in owning their learning. All of these components align to our District's Educational Plan.

The SWH approach is independent of any standard curriculum or resources. This allows the District the freedom to revise Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) as needed and provide additional resources (such as tradebooks, articles, and manipulatives) without changing the approach or method to teaching science. In addition, the SWH approach will support the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards approach to quality science instruction.

Currently, the District's science standards and grade-level expectations are aligned to the Iowa Core. The Iowa Core emphasizes integrating "Science as Inquiry" into each of the sciences: Life Science, Physical Science, and Earth and Space Science.

At each grade-level third through fifth, teachers implementing the SWH approach have examined their specific grade-level expectations. They clustered these conceptually – often crossing "types" of science and identified 3-5 "big ideas." From these big ideas, the teachers developed an essential question for this unit. The essential questions and GLEs were then "unpacked" to identify what students would need to learn in order to be able to "answer" the essential question at the end of the unit.

In SWH, students start by creating a class concept map around what they already know about the "big idea" or essential question. The key to the concept map isn't just the sharing of ideas and knowledge but the links between the concepts – students need to identify how the various concepts they want to link are related. Sometimes, prior to the formal start of the unit and the creation of the initial concept map, teachers will have a variety of authentic texts related to the topic for students to peruse and explore – so students can start thinking about the topic and what they know. The concept map provides formative data for the teacher about students' understandings and misunderstandings.

From the discussion around the concept maps, the classroom community (students and teacher) pose questions about big idea/essential question. The classroom community negotiates which of the questions are essential and non-essential in relationship to the essential question. In addition, in many classrooms, questions are identified as "our questions" – questions everyone in the class will address through investigations and research, and "your questions" – questions a student or a group of students could choose to investigate.

The questions identified as "our questions" are also identified as either testable or researchable. In other words, students identify whether they will be able to conduct an experiment in order to answer the questions or whether they will need to conduct research with authentic texts (such as trade books, articles, and the internet) in order to be able to answer the question.

Some information is gathered as a class – through Read Alouds, through a class investigation (with either the class collecting the data or individual students/groups of students collecting their own data), and through common investigations (For example, during force and motion conversations, groups of students may all use the blue tube investigation.) Other information is gathered collaboratively or individually – either through research or investigations.

Once research and/or investigations have been done, students (either individually or collaboratively) construct a claim and identify the evidence to support the claim. The claims and evidence are shared with the class and a time for negotiations occur as students attempt to construct an understanding and own their learning. The teacher is part of this community – and while he/she doesn't "give the answer," questions to create cognitive dissonance and challenges to "check the experts" are given to support the continued negotiations.

This process is how science knowledge is developed and an inquiry approach is supported.

One of the unique ways in which the SWH approach supports the development of essential skills is that it requires the implementation of literacy into the science curriculum, which in turn strengthens students' understanding of how these two areas inter-relate. In addition, this integration also supports the vertical articulation of the Common Core. The Common Core, which Iowa has adopted and which Meeker as part of the Ames Community School District has adopted, identifies Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. The SWH approach supports and expects the use of literacy in science instruction – both in terms of using science texts (tradebooks and articles) for Read Alouds and for student reading and research and in terms of students writing about their claims, evidence, findings, and conclusions. Teachers use mentor texts to share rich content information and to analyze the author's craft – how scientists write. Teachers also model how meaning can be constructed from scientific text and how scientists write. Students are asked to dig into text deeply and read closely to learn content and also become metacognitively aware of how they read science text. Students are also asked to write to communicate findings and new learnings. These scientific literary skills, concepts, processes, and strategies are supported through a gradual release of responsibility model (e.g., Pearson and Gallagher, 1983; Fisher and Frey, 2008).

One of the exciting benefits of the SWH approach is that it supports the development of the seven 21st century skills identified by Wagner in "Rigor Redefined": critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration and leadership, agility and adaptability, initiative and entrepreneurialism, effective oral and written communication, accessing and analyzing information, and creativity and imagination. In other words, this approach is supporting students in learning how to think and how to learn, through internal and external negotiations. It is preparing students for the world beyond the classroom.

5. Instructional Methods:

The Ames Community School District has a focused effort on differentiating instruction to meet the needs of each and every student. This effort is articulated in the District's Educational Plan and with the District's four guiding questions: 1) What do we want all students to learn? 2) How will we know if they learned it? 3) What will we do if they don't learn it? 4) What will we do if they do learn it?

The effort to provide differentiated instruction begins with the classroom teacher. Teachers identify essential question for units and learning outcomes for lessons and/or lesson sequences. (These outcomes are the unpacking of the standards.) The essential questions and learning outcomes are the basis for differentiation.

Classroom teachers use student performance and learning outcomes to form data-informed, small flexible groupings in literacy and math to provide differentiated instruction around the learning outcomes. In addition, collaborative and independent practice opportunities are differentiated based on student needs – especially those that extend from the small group learning opportunities.

Finally, text is differentiated for students. Providing an appropriate student-text match throughout the school day (as per Allington's recommendations) is a focus of Meeker Elementary.

In addition to classroom instruction, Meeker Elementary has a variety of programs that support differentiated instruction for students.

Meeker Elementary has four special education teachers, each with a different focus. One resource teacher supports students with Individualized Education Plans in kindergarten, first, and second grades. Another resource teacher supports students in third, fourth, and fifth grades. A behavior specialist provides instruction to students of all ages who need support with appropriate behaviors during the school day. Our fourth special education teacher works with students who have severe and profound needs.

Meeker Elementary is a school-wide Title I school. Therefore, Title I teachers have the opportunity to work with every student in the building. Title I teachers pull out students to provide small group or individualized interventions during the time on the schedule identified for interventions. This ensures students do not miss core instruction. All of these students have individualized intervention plans, including goals and a progress monitoring plan. The Title I teachers collaborate with classroom teachers on a regular basis and attend the periodic Data Meetings to ensure that instruction is aligned and to rearrange instructional groups as needed based on student growth and need.

Meeker Elementary also has an Extended Learning (Gifted) Program designed to meet the needs of students in need of enrichment and, at times, acceleration. The ELP teacher pulls out small groups of students, works with students in competitions such as the Math Olympiad and Geography Bee, and “pushes in” to classrooms to deliver “Stretch/Think” lessons. Students are identified for this program using multiple criteria, including teacher and parent input, assessment results, and the results of the Stretch/Think lessons. Students receive instruction and participate in challenging learning opportunities designed to support growth in their area of giftedness.

Meeker Elementary has an English as a Second Language (ESL) program that serves approximately 50 students. The ESL teacher pulls students out in small groups to provide vocabulary instruction, reading support, and opportunities to read, write, speak and listen. This individual also collaborates with classroom teachers to support them in providing appropriate instruction for English Language Learners in the general education setting.

6. Professional Development:

The Ames Community School District, including Meeker Elementary, employs a multi-prong approach to professional development. This approach includes system and building-wide professional development learning sessions (including theory, demonstrations, practice, collaboration, and reflection), capacity-building opportunities for lead teachers, professional learning communities, and job-embedded professional development through instructional coaches.

The first prong of the professional development approach is system-wide professional development learning sessions. These sessions are provided to all elementary teachers during 6 of the early release Wednesdays spread out approximately 6 weeks apart and during two full days of in-service (one in October and one in January). These are opportunities for all teachers to be grounded in common learnings. Differentiation then occurs during PLC conversations. This year, the focus of the work has been on instructional methods that support metacognitive awareness of and cognitive control over the cognitive strategies that support learning (and reading).

In addition, job-alike groups from across the district meet as a PLC group for professional development learning sessions once a month. Title I and special education teachers are one such group. ELL teachers are another such group. The content of these sessions aligns to the system-wide work but also focuses on the aspects of quality interventions.

At the building level, approximately one Wednesday early release time a month is provided for professional development learning sessions specifically for Meeker. The focus of these sessions is the Responsive Classroom approach. A focus on the implementation of Responsive Classroom supports the social aspects of learning that are necessary for academic learning to occur. The outcomes of this work to this point have been on establishing classroom communities, implementing Morning Meetings, using appropriate Teacher Language, providing academic choice, implementing problem solving conferences, think chairs, and buddy rooms, and establishing classroom expectations with students. This work has supported Meeker students in feeling safe and comfortable in school, which, in turn, has created a more successful learning environment.

The second prong is capacity-building. Each elementary has a lead team that consists of four teachers, the building principal, and an instructional coach. These lead teams meet as a group for a full day each month. The intent of these days is to provide common learnings across the district and develop experience and expertise at the building level prior to rolling out learnings to the entire staff. The focus of this work for the past two years was on the district's Literacy Framework. This year, the focus is on instructional methods that support metacognitive awareness of and cognitive control over the cognitive strategies that support learning (and reading). These experts can then push PLC conversations to a new level and support the reflective table talk during system-wide professional development learning sessions.

The third prong of the professional development approach is professional learning communities. Job-alike teachers form PLCs at the building-level. These PLCs meet at least once a week during common planning time and approximately two Wednesdays a month during early-release time. PLCs support the implementation of system learnings. PLCs also differentiate learnings based on the group's needs/goals identified through examination of student data.

The fourth, and final, prong of the professional development approach is job-embedded professional development provided by the instructional coaches. The instructional coaches facilitate and participate in the same professional development learning sessions as the teachers. In addition, the coaches participate in weekly PLC meetings with the classroom teacher. The instructional coaches are the supporting link between the new learnings and full implementation in the classroom. Coaches provide differentiated support to teachers in everything from analyzing data to planning instruction to modeling instruction to observing instruction and providing feedback. All of this is designed to move teachers towards full implementation of district frameworks and quality instruction.

7. School Leadership:

The Ames Community School District operates under the philosophy that the principals are the educational and instructional leaders of the schools. It is the principal's job and responsibility to make sure students and staff are continually growing and learning. As such, the elementary principals created a new schedule featuring literacy and math blocks, community building, Additional Instruction, and common planning time/peer collaboration time for grade level teams of teachers. The new schedule established priorities and ensured that all students had similar learning opportunities.

Once the District schedule was adopted, the Meeker principal helped provide professional development in order to ensure teachers could effectively utilize the schedule for student learning. Evaluation conferences, meetings about Career Development Plans, and observation discussions occur to improve instruction. To monitor implementation of the Literacy Plan, the Meeker principal takes detailed notes on walk-throughs and has follow-up conversations with teachers. The principal attends the staffs' Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings to question, clarify, coach and monitor progress. The principal strategically coordinates and plans professional development opportunities on Wednesday afternoons throughout the school year to ensure a focus on continuous improvement. These Wednesday sessions have been instrumental in moving teachers, Meeker Elementary, and The Ames Community School District forward.

The Instructional Strategist and Instructional Coaches also provide leadership toward the school's and district's mission. Coaches meet with each other and the principal weekly to reflect, evaluate, monitor, and plan. The principal and the Coaches discuss progress of teachers and plan together to help teachers grow and improve. Coaches model instructional methods for classroom teachers, observe teachers as they implement district initiatives, meet with teachers to discuss, collaborate, problem solve, and plan, and attend PLC meetings to help teams move forward. The Coaches “walk alongside” the teachers and provide job-embedded professional development that results in better teaching and learning.

Teachers share in leadership through lead-team committees such as the Responsive Classroom Committee and the Quality Instructional Leadership Team (QILT). These teachers receive additional training to build capacity prior to the rest of the staff, help plan professional development, and serve as resources as other teachers implement the new learnings. Teacher-leaders participate in PLC conversations as well to support teammates in improve instruction.

All of these stakeholders work together with a focus on continued improvement for everyone in the school. The underlying belief around professional growth at Meeker Elementary is regardless of where a teacher falls on the implementation spectrum of a particular approach, the goal is “try to get better” – to grow.

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 3 Test: Iowa Assessment

Edition/Publication Year: 2011 Publisher: Riverside

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient /Intermediate and above	88	97	86	78	79
Advanced/High	35	35	45	17	28
Number of students tested	60	63	58	58	67
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient /Intermediate and above	81	92	81	71	77
Advanced/High	22	13	24	8	23
Number of students tested	27	24	21	24	22
2. African American Students					
Proficient /Intermediate and above	Masked	Masked	Masked	50	54
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	10	9
Number of students tested	5	5	2	10	11
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient /Intermediate and above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	2	5	3	3	2
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient /Intermediate and above	Masked	Masked	40	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	10	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	6	6	10	4	7
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient /Intermediate and above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	5	8	5	6	7
6. White					
Proficient /Intermediate and above	91	100	84	83	88
Advanced/High	39	42	36	19	36
Number of students tested	46	45	44	42	50
NOTES:					
Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					
The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) was administered for the 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-2010, and 2010-11 school years. The Iowa Assessments (IA) were administered in 2011-12.					

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading Grade: 3 Test: Iowa Assessments

Edition/Publication Year: 2011 Publisher: Riverside

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	89	86	85	84	84
Advanced/High	24	24	35	27	27
Number of students tested	58	63	54	56	63
Percent of total students tested	97	100	93	97	94
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	0	4	2	4
Percent of students alternatively assessed	3	0	7	3	6
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	77	83	70	83	71
Advanced/High	12	17	20	17	14
Number of students tested	26	24	20	24	21
2. African American Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	70	36
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	10	0
Number of students tested	5	5	2	10	11
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	1	5	4	2	1
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	40	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	0	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	6	6	10	4	7
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	4	8	1	4	3
6. White					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	93	93	86	88	94
Advanced/High	18	27	36	32	34
Number of students tested	45	45	44	41	50
NOTES:					
Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					
The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) was administered for the 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-2010, and 2010-11 school years. The Iowa Assessments (IA) were administered in 2011-12. Alternately assessed Reading students are ELL in their 1st year in the United States. Their reading is tested using the IELDA test					

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 4 Test: Iowa Assessments

Edition/Publication Year: 2011 Publisher: Riverside

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	92	91	82	92	79
Advanced/High	28	41	30	33	23
Number of students tested	60	56	57	73	53
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	82	81	68	82	63
Advanced/High	9	19	14	14	5
Number of students tested	22	21	22	28	19
2. African American Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	4	3	8	7	5
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	7	4	2	2	2
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	60	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	20	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	6	10	5	7	6
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	7	3	8	5	7
6. White					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	95	91	95	95	79
Advanced/High	32	43	32	41	29
Number of students tested	41	44	37	56	38
NOTES:					
Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					
The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) was administered for the 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-2010, and 2010-11 school years. The Iowa Assessments (IA) were administered in 2011-12.					

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading Grade: 4 Test: Iowa Assessments

Edition/Publication Year: 2011 Publisher: Riverside

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	88	87	89	83	88
Advanced/High	36	36	26	36	24
Number of students tested	58	56	54	72	51
Percent of total students tested	97	100	96	98	96
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	0	2	1	2
Percent of students alternatively assessed	3	0	4	2	4
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	85	76	86	71	79
Advanced/High	20	14	10	25	5
Number of students tested	20	21	21	28	19
2. African American Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	50	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	20	Masked
Number of students tested	4	3	8	10	5
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	7	4	2	3	2
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	50	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	10	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	6	10	5	7	6
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	5	3	6	4	5
6. White					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	86	91	94	93	89
Advanced/High	40	39	40	43	29
Number of students tested	41	44	53	56	38
NOTES:					
Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					
The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) was administered for the 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-2010, and 2010-11 school years. The Iowa Assessments (IA) were administered in 2011-12. Students alternately assessed in Reading are ELL students who are in their first year in the United States. They are assessed using the IELDA test.					

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics Grade: 5 Test: Iowa Assessments

Edition/Publication Year: 2011 Publisher: Riverside

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	89	94	82	86	79
Advanced/High	44	35	32	33	22
Number of students tested	63	68	73	51	58
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	74	90	74	72	60
Advanced/High	26	19	15	11	20
Number of students tested	27	31	27	18	15
2. African American Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	80	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	10	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	6	10	8	2	9
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	4	3	3	1	3
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	8	4	6	6	8
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	6	9	8	6	6
6. White					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	91	98	83	85	84
Advanced/High	50	36	37	36	26
Number of students tested	44	44	54	39	38
NOTES:					
Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					
The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) was administered for the 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-2010, and 2010-11 school years. The Iowa Assessments (IA) were administered in 2011-12.					

STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading Grade: 5 Test: Iowa Assessments

Edition/Publication Year: 2011 Publisher: Riverside

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	80	85	87	88	78
Advanced/High	33	29	35	26	27
Number of students tested	60	68	69	49	55
Percent of total students tested	95	100	95	96	95
Number of students alternatively assessed	3	0	4	2	3
Percent of students alternatively assessed	5	0	5	4	5
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	60	77	68	78	53
Advanced/High	24	26	12	6	7
Number of students tested	25	31	25	18	15
2. African American Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	70	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	0	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	6	10	8	2	9
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	4	3	3	1	2
4. Special Education Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	8	4	6	6	8
5. English Language Learner Students					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Advanced/High	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked	Masked
Number of students tested	3	9	4	4	3
6. White					
Proficient/Intermediate and Above	86	93	94	87	84
Advanced/High	40	41	37	31	34
Number of students tested	43	44	53	39	38
NOTES:					
Masked indicates data were not made public because fewer than 10 students were tested.					
The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) was administered for the 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-2010, and 2010-11 school years. The Iowa Assessments (IA) were administered in 2011-12. Students alternately assessed in Reading are ELL students who are in their first year in the United States. They are assessed using the IELDA test.					